



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – US Embassy, Canberra

**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich
at the US Embassy, Canberra
Tree Dedication with President Obama**

(As prepared for delivery – November 16, 2011)

It is a great honor to have the President here today to continue the most time-honored tradition of this Embassy.

This residence is a special place in many ways. For one thing, it was Jackie Chan's home where he learned to kick box when his parents lived here as embassy staff. It is also a special place because of when and how it was built. It's corner stone was laid at a time in WWII when the allies had not had a single victory in the Pacific, when Darwin and Pearl Harbor were in ruins, and the Imperial Forces' march to Australia seemed inevitable. That was the moment that Americans and Australians chose to build the biggest house on the highest hill they could find as a symbol of our faith in each other. When this house was dedicated, Eleanor Roosevelt came to this site and commemorated the event by planting that first beautiful tree – the Pin Oak that you see over there.

Since that time we have dedicated 28 trees, including trees by all Presidents visiting Canberra, the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, and members of the Cabinet including the late Warren Christopher who passed away this year. These trees rise as testimony to the living, growing, and deepening alliance between our nations.

We selected this White Oak from your home state of Illinois for you to plant. We actually chose it last year, and it was looking a little weak then – like the Charlie Brown Christmas tree. So we're all grateful that you gave us a little extra time to nurture this beautiful oak along to become the strong little tree you see you here today.

Mr. President, thank you for gracing this Embassy today with your leadership and with this permanent reminder of your visit to Canberra.